

**VA****U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# News Release

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*Washington, D.C.* -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has implemented Year 2000 compliant computer software applications that support the Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) Program, the agency's largest education benefit payment program.

"We have made tremendous progress to ensure veterans' benefits programs are ready for the millennium change," said Under Secretary for Benefits Joseph Thompson. "We are committed to renovation plans that continue VA's mission of the timely delivery of benefits to our nation's veterans in the year 2000 and beyond."

The Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) Program was created to help servicemembers readjust to civilian life after military service and to aid in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified personnel in the active and reserve components of the armed forces. VA generated more than two million payments totaling more than \$809 million in fiscal year 1997 for Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty) education benefits.

The program is one of several benefit programs that VA has made Year 2000 compliant. Others include the Restored Entitlement Program for Survivors for more than 48,500 widows and children of veterans and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling program, which in fiscal year 1997 provided more than \$417 million for training, vocational and educational counseling and other services for veterans with a compensable service-connected disability.

VA also is well on the way to making other benefit programs Year 2000 compliant. These include the Compensation and Pension Program that paid more than \$19.5 billion to more than three million disabled veterans in fiscal year 1997, and three other education programs -- Montgomery GI Bill, Selected Reserve; Veterans Educational Assistance Program; and Dependents' Education Assistance Program.

The benefits software programs are among the more than 300 applications supporting 11 mission-critical system areas reflecting VA business functions, including loan guaranty, insurance, and medical as well as corporate administration systems. VA has renovated 94 percent of those applications. The department also has validated 84 percent and has implemented 61 percent of the applications.

The renovation phase concerns the modification, replacement or elimination of an application to make it Year 2000 compliant. The validation phase involves the testing of new or changed codes for date handling and functionality. Implementation of renovated and validated applications into production is scheduled for completion by March 1999.

For information on veteran's benefits, please contact the veterans benefits counselors at the local VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.